

Request for Grant Proposals

U.S. Embassy – Public Affairs Section

The United States Embassy in Sierra Leone is seeking full application grant proposals from non-U.S., non-governmental organizations (NGOs) based in Sierra Leone for projects related to civic participation and engagement – especially among women and girls, youth/adolescents, grassroots outreach; economic development and skills training; environmental protection; peace and security; and/or education.

Awards (grants or cooperative agreements) under this request for grant proposals will typically not exceed \$3,000 per award. The awards will be administered through the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy. Applications must be submitted in English and use the FY14 Public Affairs Section Grant Application Form.

This is an open assistance award process. Applications which meet the objectives this announcement are welcome at any time during the fiscal year and successful grants will be awarded until funds run out. **Applicants are encouraged to submit applications as early in the fiscal year as possible.**

U.S. Embassy in Sierra Leone

Program Office: Public Affairs Section

Funding Opportunity Title: Public Affairs Section Small Grants Program

Announcement Type: Grant or Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: S-SL200-14-GR

Deadline for Applications: Open Year Round FY14 Only

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is limited to foreign (non-U.S.) not-for-profit organizations and individuals. Direct funding for U.S. entities is not available under this announcement.

The Embassy encourages organizations that have not previously received international program funding from the U.S. Government to apply under this announcement. New applicants must have a demonstrated expertise in one or more of the following subject areas: civic participation and engagement – especially among women and girls, youth/adolescents, grassroots outreach; economic development and skills training; environmental protection; peace and security; and/or education. Applicants must show experience developing, implementing, and evaluating a program. Expertise and established relationships with community members and/or local officials in the area(s) in which the program(s) will be conducted will be considered favorably.

Cost Sharing or Matching

This program does not require cost sharing but cost sharing will be considered favorably.

Other Special Eligibility Criteria

Applicants are required to have a Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) prior to applying. Under U.S. federal law, it is mandatory to obtain a DUNS number. Applicants should also register at SAM.gov and have an active registration without exclusions.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- A) For questions relating to this grant, please call the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section at 076-515-000.
- B) For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation, contact **Marilyn Kamara**, Program Assistant, at PASGrants@state.gov.

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Embassy of the United States in Sierra Leone is pleased to announce an open competition for assistance awards through this Request for Grant Proposals (RFGP). The Embassy invites non-U.S. non-profit/non-governmental organizations to submit full grant applications for democracy-, economic development-, environmental-, peace and security-, or education-themed programs in Sierra Leone. Community, women's, and youth non-governmental organizations are encouraged to apply. The Embassy will award grants for up to \$3,000 per grant.

U.S. Embassy Perspective

The Embassy strongly believes in the value of a socially diverse population in which people of different backgrounds contribute to a more vibrant and stronger society and economy. The Embassy supports programs that strengthen democratic institutions, promote political pluralism, promote diversity and social inclusion, encourage peaceful transition of power, and protect human rights. It also seeks applications that enhance economic development, helping individuals or groups to obtain self-sufficiency or strengthen work skills. The Embassy encourages projects that seek to capacitate individuals or communities about the importance of wildlife and environmental protection. Projects that strengthen peace and stability in the country are also welcome.

II. BACKGROUND

In November 2012, Sierra Leone held its third successful election since 2002. Sierra Leonean people were applauded for their enthusiasm, patience, and civic engagement in making the voting process as smooth as possible, and most importantly, for carrying out the polls free from violence. Democracy, however, neither begins nor ends with elections. Governing democratically requires a strong commitment by newly-elected leaders and citizens to work together to create a better future for all Sierra Leoneans. Democracies have a vibrant civil society, a free press, and other independent organizations which not only support electoral outcomes by ensuring fairness, legitimacy, and compliance, but also support post-electoral follow-through, in the form of government accountability, transparency, and rule following.

One important ingredient in a resilient democracy is the fair representation of all groups, interests, and ideas in public debate and decision making. In line with this, the Embassy seeks to support small- to medium-sized projects that will strengthen Sierra Leone's democracy by lifting up voices of – or building capacity within – women, youth, rural populations, the economically disadvantaged, and the disabled.

Strong democracies also require stable economies and an environment which values education and entrepreneurship. These opportunities must be equally available to all members of society. Additionally, safety and security is vital to the ongoing development and success of any nation. As Sierra Leone continues on its path to meet the needs of its people, the state of peace and security will determine whether it can attract investors and build Sierra Leonean's confidence in the nation.

Objectives

The mission of the Public Affairs grants is to:

- Engage with Sierra Leone publics to focus attention on democracy building, economic development, peace and security, and/or environmental protection;
- Raise awareness about the importance of civic participation and provide avenues for historically marginalized groups to become engaged in decision-making in their communities;
- Support efforts by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to assist, protect, and amplify voices of diverse constituencies in Sierra Leone;
- Develop partnerships with NGOs, including women's, youth, community, and disabled people's organizations, and with private citizens who can provide resources and other assistance to solidify Sierra Leone's democracy and continued economic development.

Funding Priorities

The Embassy seeks to fund creative, innovative, and sustainable small- to medium-sized projects in Sierra Leone. Rural communities and youth or women's organizations are given priority due to the lack of resources and limited engagement. Please note that an application will not be favorably considered if it fails to demonstrate that the proposed location or target audience has a high level of need for funds and for continued or new engagement efforts.

Below is a sample list, <u>though not exhaustive</u>, of the types of democracy themed projects the Embassy will consider funding:

- Essay or opinion writing workshops for junior or senior secondary school students on issues related to youth;
- Mentorship programs to assist local NGOs develop models for expanding grassroots outreach. These models can include, but are not limited to, such topics as:
 - o Strategic planning for engaging new audiences, or expanding reach
 - o Understanding and providing for inclusion of diverse voices,
 - Identifying and developing innovative channels of communication with elected leaders;
- Training for female political leaders or aspirants.

III. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility is limited to foreign (non-U.S. based) not-for-profit organizations and individuals based in and serving Sierra Leone. The Embassy encourages organizations that have not previously received international program funding from the United States government (USG) to apply under this announcement.

Applicants are not required to include funding from other donors. Applications that include additional in-kind and/or cash contributions from non-USG sources will be more competitive, since cost-sharing demonstrates a strong commitment to the planned activities and will be considered to show great cost effectiveness.

All potential applicants should be knowledgeable of existing programs in Sierra Leone, including those funded by USG, in order to avoid duplication of effort.

Applicants are required to have a Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) prior to applying. Under U.S. federal law, it is mandatory to obtain a DUNS number. Applicants should also register at SAM.gov and have an active registration without exclusions.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Award Period: 0-12 months

Award Amount: The maximum grant award will be \$3,000 per grant. Multi-year proposals will not be considered.

Application Submission Process: Applicants must submit full applications electronically or in hard copy. The application is attached, available on our website at www.freetown.usembassy.gov, available in person from the Embassy Dr. John Taylor Williams Library, or applicants may contact the Public Affairs Section for a copy of the application. For questions about this solicitation, contact **Marilyn Kamara**, Program Assistant, at:

<u>Email</u>: <u>PASGrants@state.gov</u> (Preferred method of communication)

Phone: 076-515-000

Application Deadline: This is an open competition. Applications are welcomed throughout the fiscal year until funds have been exhausted. **Begin the application process early**, as this will allow time to address any technical difficulties that may arise in meeting the full requirements of this grant announcement.

Applicants are <u>required</u> to have a Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) prior to applying. Under U.S. federal law, it is mandatory to obtain a DUNS number. Applicants should also register at SAM.gov and have an active registration without exclusions.

Application Content: Applicants must follow the RFGP instructions and conditions contained herein and supply all information required. **Failure to furnish all information or comply with stated requirements will result in disqualification from the competition.** Applicants must set forth full, accurate, and complete information as required by this RFGP.

Applications may not exceed ten (10) single-spaced pages in 12-point, Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. This requirement excludes allowable appendices such as a list of the board of directors, organizational budget, or CVs or resumes of project staff. Organizations are permitted to submit multiple grant proposals, but should be aware that the Embassy seeks to provide opportunities to as many organizations as possible, and is unlikely to fund an organization to work in more than one location. The application must be submitted using the Embassy Public Affairs Section Grant Application.

V. AWARD SELECTION CRITERIA

The Embassy reserves the right to give priority for its funds to those organizations working on key USG objectives that are and have been supportive, in policy and programs, of USG policies on democracy building, peaceful transition of power, and government accountability.

Evaluation Criteria: Applicants should note that the following criteria (1) serve as a standard against which all proposals will be evaluated, and (2) serve to identify the significant matters that should be addressed in all proposals. The Embassy will award grants to the applicants whose offers represent the best value to the Embassy on the basis of technical merit and cost.

Each application will be evaluated by a review committee from the Public Affairs Section of the Embassy and other experts, as deemed appropriate. The evaluation criteria have been tailored to the requirements of this RFGP.

- **Project Need (30 points):** This section should identify the importance and relevance of the applicant's proposal to the broader USG and Embassy policy objectives on democracy building and civic engagement as well as relevance to the program objectives of the Embassy as described under the first two sections of this solicitation. Emphasis will be placed on the extent to which the proposed activity complements existing efforts in Sierra Leone or fills a gap and does not duplicate other programs, including those funded by USG. A compelling statement of need for the program, with regards to the stated problem and limitations on resources in the proposed location, will be given great consideration by the review panel.
- **Project Goals/Activities Plan/Sustainability (40 points):** Applicants should describe what they propose to do and how they will do it. The proposed activities must directly relate to meeting the goals and objectives, and applicants should include information on how they will measure activities' effectiveness. The review panel will be viewing the implementation plan in terms of how well it addresses the problem statement, relevance of the goals and objectives, feasibility of the proposed activities and their timeline for completion, and the extent to which the impact of the project will continue beyond the conclusion of the funding period.
- Organizational History and Capability (15 points): Proposals should demonstrate the ability to develop and implement programs in the area of democracy building and civic engagement. Applicants must demonstrate how their resources, capabilities, and experience will enable them to achieve the stated goals and objectives. In addition, applicants should describe how and with whom they will collaborate to meet project goals. The application must distinguish all key partners and organizations that will be involved in the identification of, and service delivery to, the target audience.
- **Budget (15 points):** Costs shall be evaluated for realism, control practices, and efficiency. The Embassy must determine that the costs paid for this award are

reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the proposed project activities. This will consist of a review of the budget to determine if the overall costs are realistic for the work to be performed, if the costs reflect the applicant's understanding of the allowable cost principles, and if the costs are consistent with the program narrative.

• Appendices (OPTIONAL – Extra 5 points):

- Resume: The review panel will consider the appropriateness of the selected project director, in view of the role and responsibility that person will play in guiding the project through implementation to completion. Position descriptions submitted in lieu of the resume will be reviewed for the appropriateness of the qualifications and skills identified.
- Letters of Intent: While submission of Letters of Intent is optional, and applications without will not be penalized, the review panel will favorably view their inclusion. Working in partnership with other organizations spreads work, shares responsibility, and maximizes the potential for impact and sustainability. The review panel will consider the types and depth of relationships that the applicant has with local organizations. The panel will also review the letters to determine the willingness of local organizations to participate in the effort, and that all parties have an understanding of their unique roles and responsibilities in terms of the proposed project.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Award Notices: The grant award or co-operative agreement shall be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Embassy Grants Officer. The Grants Officer is the USG official delegated the authority by the U.S. Department of State Procurement Executive to write, award, and administer overseas grants and cooperative agreements. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the Recipient through either mail or electronic (email) transmission. Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified in writing within 30 days of their application reaching the Grants Officer.

Anticipated Time to Award: Applicants should expect to be notified of the *recommended* grant applications within 30 days after submission. Following this initial notification, <u>selected</u> <u>applicants will be expected to submit revised applications, if applicable, no later than 7 days after the notice of recommendation</u>. Embassy Public Affairs staff will provide information at the point of notification about the requirements for the award and suggested revisions to the activities, if applicable. The final and revised applications will not be subject to further competition, but must incorporate any suggested changes made by the Embassy.

Successful applicants should expect to receive their grant funds via electronic funds transfer within one month after the Embassy approves their full application. The Embassy is not responsible for bank or transaction fees associated with an EFT if it is not included in an approved budget. Applicants should be aware that under some circumstances, grants may be

issued on a reimbursement-only basis. Any delay in payments is primarily due to the extensive clearance process that must be undertaken prior to grant awards being made.

Issuance of this RFGP does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Embassy or the USG, nor does it commit the Embassy or USG to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the Embassy reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

• Reporting Requirements: Grantees are required to submit final program progress and financial reports at the conclusion of the project time period. Final programmatic and financial reports are due 90 days after the close of the project period. Some recipients may be asked to provide interim progress reports in the middle of a project period. These progress and financial reports are due 30 days after the required reporting period. Progress reports at a minimum should be submitted via electronic mail to an address to be provided in the award. Failure to provide timely interim or progress reports as required in the grant agreement may result in the collection of funds and/or designation of the individual or organization as high-risk. The Embassy reserves the right to conduct site visits, arranged or unannounced.

VII. DISCLAIMER

By submitting an application, responding individuals and/or organizations accept full responsibility for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of their application. Preaward expenses will not be reimbursed. If a proposal is selected for funding, the Embassy has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with the award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of the Embassy. Grantees will be expected to comply with the U.S. Department of State's Standard Overseas Terms and Conditions. Successful applicants receive their grant funds via electronic funds transfer. The Embassy is not responsible for bank or transaction fees associated with an EFT if it is not included in an approved budget.